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UNHCR ACTIVITIES FINANCED BY VOLUNTARY FUNDS: REPORT FOR 1994-1995 AND PROPOSED PROGRAMMES AND BUDGET FOR 1996

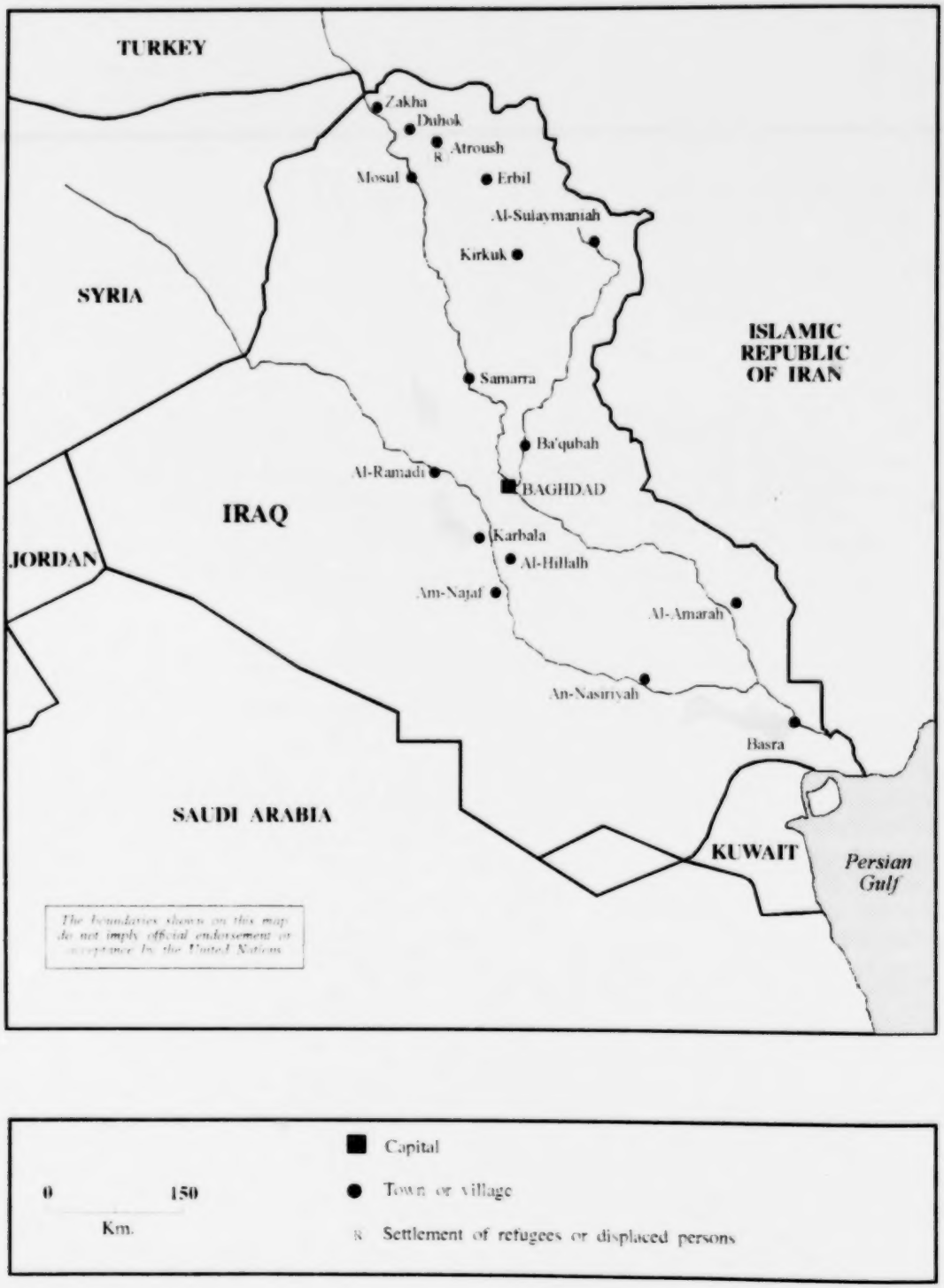
PART V. SOUTH WEST ASIA, NORTH AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Section 7 - Iraq

(submitted by the High Commissioner)

GE.95-02240

IRAQ


TURKEY
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Al-Ramadi
BAGHDAD
IRAQ
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Al-Hillalh
JORDAN
An-Najaf
Al-Amarah
An-Nasiriyah
Basra
SAUDI ARABIA
KUWAIT
Persian
Gulf
The boundaries shown on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.
Capital
Town or village
R Settlement of refugees or displaced persons
0 150
Km.

V.7 IRAQ

1. Beneficiary population

1. At the end of 1994, Iraq hosted almost 120,000 refugees, including 44,300 Iranians, 62,500 Palestinians, 12,200 Turks of Kurdish origin and 620 Eritreans. Between April 1994 and March 1995, 7,102 females and 7,241 males arrived in Iraq. Of these, 56 per cent are children below the age of 14 years, of which 2,238 are under five.

2. Developments in 1994 and 1995

2. The ongoing embargo and continuing inflation of the Iraqi dinar weigh heavily upon the Iraqi population as well as upon the refugees, and pose a major challenge to UNHCR in the implementation of its programmes.

(a) Emergency assistance

3. Following the April 1994 arrival in Northern Iraq of several thousand Turkish nationals of Kurdish origin, UNHCR initiated an assistance programme funded through an allocation from the 1994 Emergency Fund. Food and relief items were provided in towns and villages a few kilometres away from the Turkish border where they were initially located. To better ensure the safety of refugees, UNHCR relocated them in Atroush camp in the Governorate of Dohuk, located about 60 kilometres south of Dohuk city and some 100 kilometres from the border. The onset of winter delayed shelter construction so winterized tents were provided instead. By January 1995, some 9,000 persons had moved into Atroush camp, exceeding its capacity. A second site was identified, and by April 1995, the new camp had been built and was housing about 13,700 of the 14,343 persons living in the area. Roads, sanitary and water facilities, health clinics and warehouses have been built but still require additional expansion and improvement. Pending the possibility of voluntary repatriation, a project has been established to provide assistance to newly-arrived refugees including food (to be provided by WFP), domestic items, shelter, basic health care, primary education, community services, water and sanitation.

(b) Repatriation of Iraqi Kurds

4. During 1994, assistance was provided to 1,662 families, comprising 8,776 persons of an estimated 10,000, who had returned from the Islamic Republic of Iran. The main items distributed were shelter materials, livestock, as well as agricultural and carpentry kits.

5. During 1995, a similar assistance programme will continue for 2,000 families. It is expected that savings will be made on equipment and consultant costs as well as on salaries for international non-governmental organization (NGO) staff. Under quick impact projects (QIPs), seeds and agricultural tools will be added to the assistance package.

(c) Care and maintenance

6. Assistance was provided to 45,000 beneficiaries whose basic food needs were met by WFP. In 1994, a supplementary food basket was provided by UNHCR that initially included only dates and high protein biscuits, but which was expanded to include milk for school children and cereal for babies with dietary problems. Because of WFP's difficulty in obtaining more that half of the required ration of wheat flour and lentils, UNHCR was obliged to make up the shortfall using its own resources.

7. Minor improvements were made to the road, water and sanitation systems in Altash Camp but further improvements are still required in 1995. Medicine and medical supplies were provided to the Altash health clinic, to the hospitals in Ramadi, Misan, Wasit as well as to the Palestinian and Iraqi Red Crescent Societies. In 1994, special counselling services were provided to 1,003 vulnerable cases, including handicapped and elderly persons, unaccompanied minors, women in need of protection, victims of torture and the sick. Women are encouraged to participate in teaching and counselling activities. Self-sufficiency courses are held for women in which they are taught sewing, dress-making, cooking and carpet weaving skills.

8. Some 5,300 refugee students received educational assistance in 1994. During 1995, their numbers increased to 5,880. Towards the end of 1994, vocational training was introduced for female and male adolescent refugees.

9. During 1995, refugees will be provided with documents to legalize their status. Information seminars are planned for Iraqi government officials on refugee issues and on the work of UNHCR.

(d) Voluntary repatriation

10. The voluntary repatriation programmes planned for 8,000 during 1994 yielded very limited results. Only 5 Iranians and 35 Africans were assisted. This low number is attributed to the reluctance of countries of origin to accept returnees. For 1995, funds were foreseen for the repatriation of 2,000 persons. It is feared however that only a small fraction of the 12,000 Iranians and the 150 refugees from various African countries, including Eritrea, Sudan and Somalia, will be able to return home.

(e) Resettlement

11. Because resettlement opportunities were very limited during 1994, the target to resettle 2,000 refugees was reduced to 400 and only 280 were resettled. Efforts are being made to improve the situation in 1995 and the current target is to resettle 1,000. They will be provided with transportation and a small resettlement grant. By 30 April 1995, 1,083 Iranian refugees whose cases had been submitted to resettlement countries were waiting for resettlement offers for 43 women-at-risk, 35 victims of torture, 65 security cases and 64 medical cases.

3. 1996 country programmes

(a) Objectives

12. With United Nations sanctions still in force, and Iraq experiencing dramatically deteriorating economic conditions, UNHCR assistance will continue to focus on the care and maintenance of a total of 56,610 refugees, including 38,560 Iranians, 17,500 Turkish Kurds, 200 Palestinians and 350 urban refugees of various origins. Wherever possible, durable solutions will be pursued to enable refugees to either repatriate or resettle.

(i) Turkish refugees of Kurdish origin

13. Some 17,500 refugees who were moved to Atroush Camp from the Qassrouk valley near the Turkish border will receive assistance consisting of supplementary food, household items, improved water supply systems and latrines, medicine, health education, shelter, community services, educational facilities and identification cards. Opportunities for their repatriation are not yet realistic.

(ii) Iranian refugees of Kurdish origin

14. While care and maintenance will continue to complement the assistance provided by the Iraqi Government to the 4,000 individuals living in Northern Iraq and to the 22,500 refugees in Altash Camp, UNHCR will continue to pursue its efforts to achieve the voluntary repatriation of these groups. Successful results will depend on the development of bilateral negotiations between the Governments of Iraq and the Islamic Republic of Iran. For those who are unable or unwilling to repatriate, efforts to resettlement them, will continue, although to date such efforts have met with little success. During their stay in Iraq, UNHCR will provide refugees with complementary food, social welfare services, community development activities, vocational training courses and infrastructure support at Altash camp.

(iii) Iranian refugees of Arab origin

15. This group, comprising some 12,000 Ahwazis, has access to agricultural land, freedom of movement and is allowed to work. However, because of the general economic situation in Iraq and in spite of their ethnic origin, their actual situation is precarious and they will continue to require UNHCR support to strengthen community-based services such as the water supply systems in the Wasit and Misan areas. When the situation permits, voluntary repatriation will be promoted.

(iv) Refugees from various African countries

16. The most desirable solution for these 350 refugees is voluntary repatriation and efforts will continue, on a case-by-case basis, to work towards this goal. Meanwhile, they will benefit from care and maintenance assistance as well as the payment of school fees and related expenses for those who need to complete their secondary education.

(b) Proposed budgets for 1996

(i) General Programmes

17. **Care and maintenance**: It is proposed to continue assistance programmes for Iranian refugees at Altash Camp while negotiations continue for their voluntary repatriation. The programme for a total of some 35,000 beneficiaries will continue with little change from previous years.

18. Assistance for an estimated 17,500 Turkish refugees of Kurdish origin covered under Special Programmes in 1995 is budgeted in 1996 under General Programmes. Should efforts towards finding durable solutions by creating conditions conducive to voluntary repatriation not yield the desired results, it will be necessary to continue assisting those remaining in Atroush Camp. Its infrastructure will need to be improved and maintained, which will result in about 50 per cent of the allocation being set aside for the shelter sector. Social counselling and educational assistance for some 2,500 school children will be conducted in addition to support in the health, water and sanitation sectors.

19. **Voluntary repatriation**: It is planned to assist up to 10,200 refugees to return voluntarily to their countries of origin. In anticipation of positive developments in negotiations between the Islamic Republic of Iran, the country of asylum and UNHCR regarding the voluntary repatriation of Iranian refugees, provisions have been made to assist some 10,000 Iranian refugees to return to their homeland.

20. **Resettlement**: In parallel with negotiations between the country of origin, the country of asylum and UNHCR regarding the repatriation of Iranian refugees in Altash Camp, efforts will continue towards finding resettlement opportunities for some 1,000 deserving cases who have no possibility of local integration in Iraq or of voluntary repatriation. The payment of fees for health screening will be covered.

(ii) Special Programmes

21. **Reintegration assistance for Iraqi returnees**: A project of assistance is planned for 3,000 refugee families comprising 15,000 persons. This assistance, as in previous years, will be part of a multi-sectoral approach jointly implemented in cooperation with regional authorities, other United Nations agencies and NGOs.

(c) Implementing partners

22. UNHCR will continue to cooperate with Shelter Now International (SNI) in the implementation of the assistance programme for the repatriation of Iraqi nationals of Kurdish origin returning from neighbouring countries. In Northern Iraq, where it is extremely difficult to find implementing partners, UNHCR has identified Response, Relief, Resettlement, Rehabilitation (4Rs) and the Swedish Health Organization (Qandil) as NGOs willing to assist in the implementation of UNHCR programmes.

(d) Programme Delivery and Administrative Costs

(i) 1994 expenditures (all sources of funds)

23. The 1994 expenditures were lower than the revised estimates, mainly because the post of Senior Programme Coordinator was not filled until August 1994. As in previous years, a UNHCR presence in Iraq continued to be maintained by the Office of the UNHCR Chief of Mission in Baghdad, which covered the northern areas as well. The UNHCR response in Northern Iraq required the deployment of missions by international staff, strengthened by local staff, to Erbil and Dohuk. Several such missions were undertaken. In addition, a UNHCR resettlement mission went to Baghdad to pre-screen potential resettlement cases. As a result, expenditures under travel were higher than expected. On the other hand, the low rate of repatriation of Iraqi Kurds from the Islamic Republic of Iran produced savings under most of the other budget chapters, particularly under general operating expenses.

(ii) Revised 1995 requirements (all sources of funds)

24. The revised 1995 requirements are higher than the initial estimates as a result of the new influx of Turkish Kurds in the north. This required the creation of three additional posts in Dohuk that took effect on 1 January 1995: a Field Officer, a Field Assistant and a Driver. Requirements under salaries, common staff costs and for travel on official business are accordingly considerably higher. Other increases include the purchase of replacement vehicles and additional telecommunication equipment, also in support of the programme for assistance to Turkish Kurds.

(iii) Initial 1996 requirements (all sources of funds)

25. The 1996 initial requirements are lower than the revised 1995 requirements. All previously approved time limited posts have been extended until 31 December 1996. No changes are therefore expected under salaries and common staff costs. Because of the uncertainty of the future situation of the Kurdish refugees in Northern Iraq, and taking into account current operational planning assumptions, no specific provision is made at this stage for 1996 programme delivery and administrative support costs in support of the assistance to Turkish Kurds in the north. As a result, the initial 1996 requirements are lower, mainly under travel, general operating expenses and permanent equipment, but these may have to be revised later according to developments.

UNHCR EXPENDITURE IN IRAQ

(in thousands of United States dollars)

1994	1995		1996	
AMOUNT OBLIGATED	ALLOCATION APPROVED BY 1994 EXCOM	PROPOSED REVISED ALLOCATION	SOURCE OF FUNDS AND TYPE OF ASSISTANCE	PROPOSED ALLOCATION/ PROJECTION
GENERAL PROGRAMMES (1)				
973.9	–	–	EMERGENCY FUND	–
294.0	350.3	350.3	CARE AND MAINTENANCE	997.6
82.3	50.0	50.0	VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION	50.0
32.5	167.3	116.3	RESETTLEMENT	110.9
996.8	1,279.5	1,462.2	PROGRAMME DELIVERY See Overview Tables (Part II)	1,993.1
2,379.5	1,847.1	1,978.8	SUB–TOTAL OPERATIONS	3,151.6
270.3	548.1	342.4	ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT See Overview Tables (Part II)	328.5
2,649.8	2,395.2	2,321.2	TOTAL (1)	3,480.1
SPECIAL PROGRAMMES (2)				
1,260.5	1,887.4	1,740.1	OTHER TRUST FUNDS	1,005.8
659.6	405.2	991.0	PROGRAMME DELIVERY See Overview Tables (Part II)	87.4
1,920.1	2,292.6	2,731.1	TOTAL (2)	1,093.2
4,569.9	4,687.8	5,052.3	GRAND TOTAL (1+2)	4,573.3